

Tinted films have purists seeing red

By MEREDITH CHAPLIN

The thought of tarting up old black and white movies with color sent movie purists pale in the US.

Adding lipstick and blue eyes to monochrome screen goddesses was enough to send half Hollywood running to court to do battle.

Now Queensland TV viewers have a chance to see what the colorful brawl is all about. Channel 0 screens the first of the colorised classics in a Bill Collins movie presentation Saturday at 8.30pm.

It's Errol Flynn flashing a sword in the brilliant pirate classic *The Sea Hawk* — in a rainbow of computerised color.

Don't laugh, now. This is a step up from the sheets of red or blue cellophane that were sticky-taped to black and white TV sets two decades ago.

According to early reports, colorisation is technically excellent, reflective of how much effort — and money — colorisers now put into the process.

TVO could not have picked a movie more ripe for retouch than *The Sea Hawk*.

Brenda Marshall, Claude Rains, Donald Crisp, Flora Robson and a half dozen other great, old-time classic actors join Flynn in a swashbuckling, Elizabethan high seas adventure, loaded with romance and beautifully crafted by director Michael Curtiz.

It is here the contention has arisen. Should a director — a great like Curtiz in



Errol Flynn and Brenda Marshall in a scene from the colorised The Sea Hawk.

this case — who has worked in the medium of black and white, have his carefully considered effort redone decades later by a tint machine?

Heavyweight Hollywood directors and stars do not think so. Woody Allen, the late John Huston, Sidney Pollack, Milos Forman, Elliott Silverstein and many others have taken up arms with stars such as Bette Davis, James Stewart and Ginger Rogers.

They challenge the right of film companies to buy old movies and re-release them colored. They have labelled the practice 'mutilation' and Ginger Rogers has said she felt painted up like a birthday cake.

While the row rages, the colored movies are pouring out — mainly from Seven Net-

work owner Christopher Skase's Hal Roach Studios, the parent company of Colorization Inc. in the US.

Movie critic Bill Collins, meanwhile, is having a bob each way — deploring the need to improve on classics, but presenting colorised films on TV just the same.

He sees the technique as a hook to attract viewers to the great movies of the 1930s and 1940s.

"It's like a child reading a comic book and then reading the book," he said.

"If colorisation encourages more people to watch *Captain Blood*, or *The Sea Hawk*, or *Destination Tokyo* or *Yankee Doodle Dandy* — well then I guess it serves a purpose."



Contents November 8, 1987.

TV Programs

Today	19
Monday	20
Tuesday	21
Wednesday	22
Thursday	24
Friday	26
Saturday	27
Country	28

Sport

Complete look at all the sport coming up on television. P4.

Video and Trivia

Read about the latest video releases and see how much you really know about TV series. P29

Starwatch

Mike Willesee has been asked to reconsider his decision to quit his current affairs show. P4.

Movies

Guide to all the movies, highlighting the week's pick. P12/13.

Crossword and Letters

Brainteasers for TV fanatics and readers have their say. P30.

Previews

For 25 years smooth-talking spy James Bond has been thrilling audiences around the world. To celebrate his quarter-century, Channel 0 looks at the four stars who have been 007. P6/7.

Star Story

Today show co-host Elizabeth Hayes is geared up to drive in the celebrity race at the Adelaide Grand Prix. Her partner George Negus says she is mad! P10/11.

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